

## **North Smithfield Planning Board Meeting**

**Kendall Dean School, 83 Greene Street**

**Thursday, March 4, 2010, 7:00 PM**

**The Chair called the meeting to order at 7:02 pm.**

### **1. Roll Call**

**Present: Chair Scott Gibbs, Alex Biliouris, Stephen Vowels, Gene Simone, Dean Naylor, Art Bassett. Absent: Joe Cardello. Also present were Town Planner Bob Ericson and Town Solicitor Rick Nadeau. (Mr. Nadeau left at 7:40 pm, following agenda item 4—Redevelopment Agency ordinance review)**

### **2. Approval of Minutes: February 18, 2010**

**Mr. Biliouris made a motion to approve the minutes of February 18, 2010. Mr. Vowels seconded the motion, with all in favor.**

### **3. Marshfield Commons: Major Land Development Project Master Plan Informational Meeting**

**Owner/Applicant: Woonsocket Neighborhood Development Corporation**

**Location: Mechanic Street, Assessor's Plat 1, Lots 69 and 423**

**Zoning: RS-40 (Suburban Residential)**

**(Previously subject to a master plan informational meeting of Jan. 7,**

**Feb 4, and Feb 18, 2010)**

**Mr. Ericson informed the Board that the applicant has requested to continue the hearing to March 18, 2010 in order for them to follow up on the comments from other Town departments that the Board requested. They also need to rework the plans, using woonerf design, which Mr. Ericson explained was a Dutch design concept. The Chair asked that the Board be given more information on this concept.**

**The Board also discussed the state law on comprehensive permits versus Town subdivision regulations, and what the Board needs to consider under the state law.**

**At this time, the original clock is still running on this project, which would mean that a vote needs to be taken by the end of April. Mr. Ericson informed the Board that if the applicant has not presented enough information for the Board to make an informed decision by that time, they can vote to extend the clock. He also told them that a vote of approval with serious conditions is more defensible on appeal than a denial.**

**The Board also discussed the state requirements for low and moderate income housing. Mr. Ericson stated that currently the Town is at 9.27 % of the 10% required by state law. The addition of 38 housing units (the number in the current plan of Marshfield**

**Commons) would bring the Town to 10.1%. Once the new census is completed, the percentage would likely dip below 10% again. The Chair asked that these numbers be double-checked, stating that he had recently spoken with Kevin Flynn who doubted the current percentage is accurate.**

**Mr. Biliouris asked a question about the Fiscal Impact Study submitted, but Mr. Nadeau stated that the Board needs to wait until the applicant is present to discuss that study.**

**Mr. Nadeau urged the Board to ask the Zoning Board for a recommendation on the requested variances, even if it is done by just the submission of a letter. Mr. Ericson stated that in regard to comments from other Town departments and boards, the comments must pertain to the plan of record, so if the plan changes, they must submit new comments each time.**

**Mr. Vowels made a motion to continue the hearing to March 18, 2010 at 7:00 pm. Mr. Naylor seconded the motion, with all in favor.**

#### **4. Redevelopment Agency: Review of draft ordinance with possible recommendations**

**Mr. Nadeau informed the Board that the Town Council had asked him to make some revisions of the Redevelopment Agency Ordinance. He is trying to clear up the definition of a blighted area. They had also**

asked him to look into reinserting the Planning Board and Zoning Board into the approval process. The concern is that in doing so, the Town may be going against the state statute. A redevelopment district is formed through an act of the Town Council, based on a plan submitted with maps attached. This was done for Branch Village. The Town Council is concerned that the Planning Board and Zoning Board are eliminated from the approval process. Mr. Nadeau stated that this is not so; the process is more streamlined, with one Board for approval, but other Boards can still review and make recommendations on the applications. The Planning and Zoning Boards will have some concurrent jurisdiction and input into the plans.

Mr. Ericson will email drafts of the revisions to the ordinance to the Board for review. Mr. Nadeau stated that the Town Council would welcome their input and if the Planning Board would like, he can ask the Council to defer approval until the April meeting. The Chair stated that he would prefer that the Town Council delay action until the Planning Board can comment. The Board agreed with this.

The Board also discussed eminent domain and how this plays into the redevelopment district process.

## **5. Overview of Capital Budgeting**

Mr. Ericson told the Board that in order to comply with the Town

charter, the capital budget requests must pass through the Planning Board for review and recommendation. The Board discussed whether they want to go through the entire process and hear presentations from each department, or to pass it along to the Town Council and Budget Committee. The Chair stated that he feels strongly that the process needs to be revised and that he does not think capital budget review is a role of the Planning Board.

Mr. Biliouris stated that as a former member of the Budget Committee, he believes the problem is the substance of the presentations. He stated that there is usually not enough information presented for the boards to make intelligent decisions, which results in a futile effort. The approach has traditionally been that of presenting a wish list and settling for whatever the Council approves. Mr. Ericson stated that the reality is that town departments have trouble getting three estimates for requests because they know the money usually does not come through.

Mr. Ericson also stated that he believes a better process would be to grant each department an opportunity line and have each department work to find the best deals and best way to use the money granted. He stated that Public Works has a strong history of saving the Town a great deal of money by finding good deals on expensive equipment.

The Board decided that until the process is formally changed, they will do as required by the charter and hear full presentations from

each department on their capital requests. The Chair asked that the information be given to the Board well in advance of the meetings and include good details on the requests.

## **6. Planning Update: Review of current events**

Mr. Ericson provided the Board with information on a workshop, Making Good Land Use Decisions, and told them that the Planning Department has money in its budget for any members who would like to attend. The Board should let Mr. Ericson know if they would like to attend.

Mr. Ericson informed the Board of the Town Council's recent meeting at which they discussed the proposed Slatersville Historic District. Each Board member was given a map of the proposed area. Mr. Ericson stated that as proposed, it will be a subset of a National Historic Register district, which will include Slater Mill, the Ashton section of Cumberland, and the Kelly House. Mr. Ericson said that the process for approving an historic district is similar to that of a zoning amendment. The Town Council will have a public hearing in May and the Planning Board will be able to review and provide comment. The Board asked for copies of the regulations for approval.

Mr. Vowels asked about the status of the Dowling Village project. Mr. Ericson stated that they have come in for a building permit and that the announcement of a tenant for Retail #10 will come at the end of

**this month.**

**Mr. Vowels made a motion to adjourn at 8:06 pm. Mr. Simone seconded the motion, with all in favor.**